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SEPTEMBER

VOL.  
18

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM  
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Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

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"HOUSEHOLD WORDS"

PART 106

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1877.

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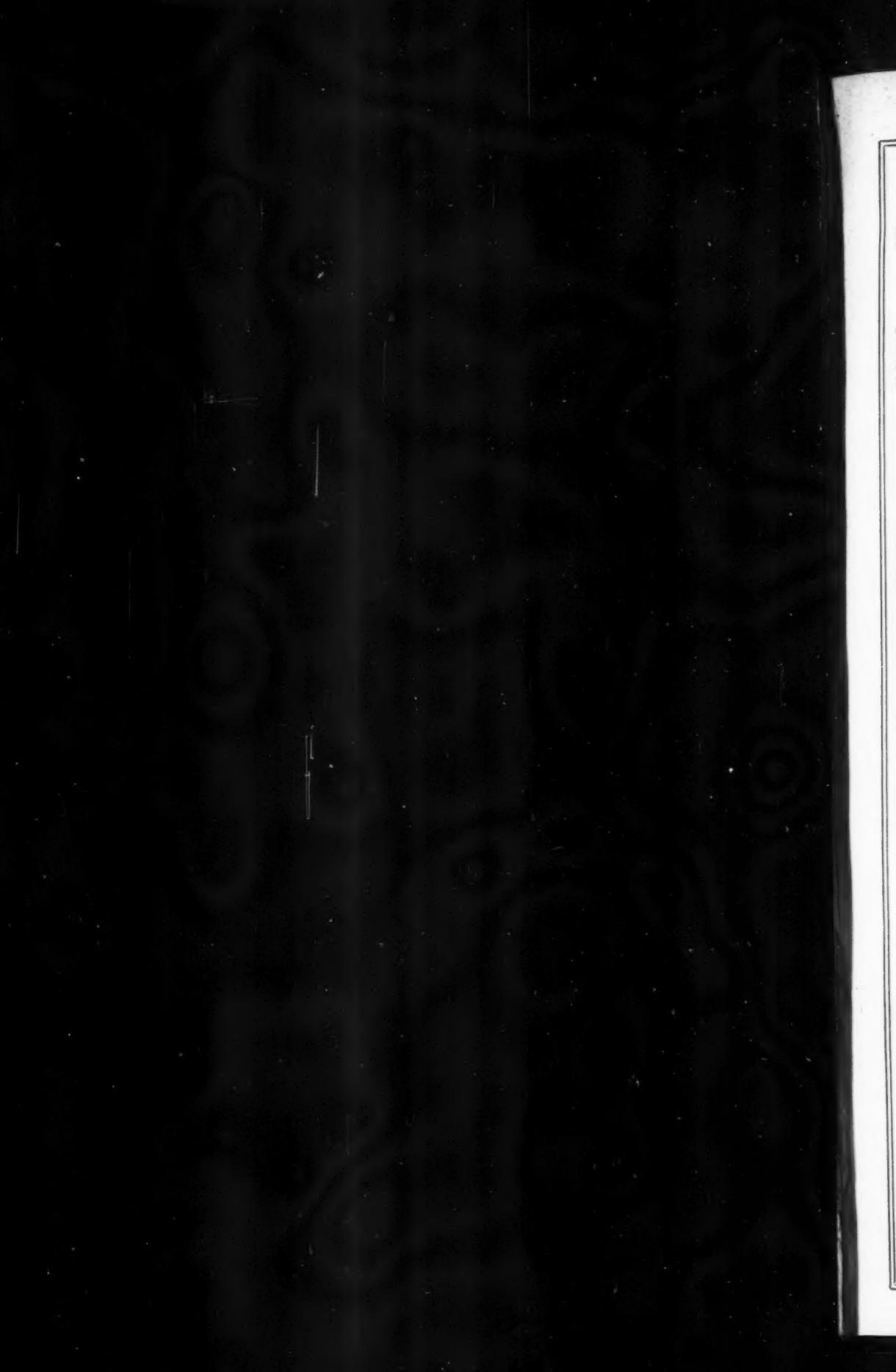
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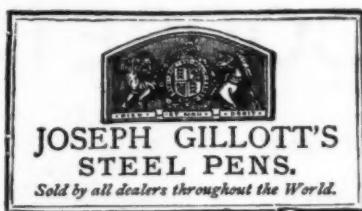
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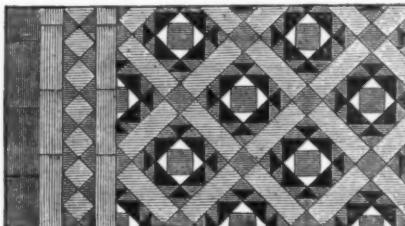
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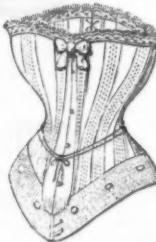


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THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR

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A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED  
"Household Words"

No. 457. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 1877.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

## STRANGE WATERS.

BY R. E. FRANCILLON,

AUTHOR OF "OLYMPIA," "PEARL AND EMERALD," &c. &c.

BOOK I.

### CHAPTER III. A STORM IN A TEA-CUP.

The next morning was sunshine after rain.

The young painter rose early, as became his profession. Indeed it would have been worse than a sin and a shame, it would have been positive discomfort, to lie in the truckle-bed in a sort of nondescript attic of The Five Adzes, when the sun was staring broadly in at the window-panes, and bringing in with the light an atmosphere that was half of carnations, half of stable. It was not more than five o'clock when Walter Gordon threw himself from under the horse-cloth or whatever it was that served for a blanket, and forced wide open the lattice window. It had assuredly never been opened since it was made. And, as the window flew open, he received all over his head and shoulders a bright and fragrant shower-bath from the dripping vine-leaves.

What in all the earth is sweeter than such mornings, when the rain-drops, though they still half-drown the roses, are like tears of joy? The rain had played havoc enough with the flower garden of The Five Adzes and the vegetable garden too; but cabbages and cabbage-roses alike were laughing at their own destruction. The house was not yet awake.

"I wonder how that singing woman fared in The Five Adzes," thought Walter, as he took another glittering shower-bath, with his hat off, under a plum-tree. "I have a shadowy sort of a next-morning-

feeling on me that she made fools of us all somehow last night—even the sexton. Fancy meeting Clari at a village public! I must get to the bottom of it all somehow; and I must improve the acquaintance. Not that it's hard to know her. I've seen her sort budding in Lindenheim. Irma would have made just such another, only—no; Irma would never have drunk beer out of a pewter. And to think I ever thought myself over head-and-ears in love with Irma! Well, we were a lot of young fools at Lindenheim, in the days when we were—old. I wonder where they all are now. We haven't done so very much, for all the geniuses that we were." He leant with his arms on a gate and watched a cow taking her breakfast; and somehow there seemed a sort of sentimental sympathy about the cow. "Yes; it is true, madam," he said to her. "You and I are alone now, but we have not always been. There is something in the air to-day like Lindenheim. I suppose it's because I've never been up so early since I was there, or had such a recollection of having drunk so much beer. It's a fine morning, madam; and I have no doubt the rain was good for something or other, except for Monsieur Prosper. I suppose you will be honoured this morning by providing, in conjunction with the pig and the hen, a breakfast for a *prima donna*. That will be something to tell your calves' calves, for a Laxton cow. I must draw your portrait, madam, and make a present of you to The Five Adzes. I must get in my hand for Lady Quorne. For you must know, madam, that, simple—I may say, shabby—as I stand here, I am on my way to a live countess's; think of that, madam. Such is art—last night, eggs and bacon;

to-night, ortolans and chambertin; to-morrow night—who knows? I'm not sure I don't prefer the eggs and bacon. I wonder if art is privileged to shooting-jacket and slippers at my Lord Quorne's. I wish the house would stir. There's something terribly hungry about the smell of roses. And that grass of yours makes me feel like—like—Nebuchadnezzar."

A man who talks so idly to a cow for the sake of company, is pretty sure to be heart-whole; and that being so, Walter Gordon was in the right mood to enjoy the luxury of that perfect morning. He presently vaulted over the gate, and increased his appetite by walking some half-dozen miles. And it was still early when he returned.

At the garden-gate he met the under-gamekeeper, carrying a monstrous cabbage-leaf—fresh and dewy, like all the rest of the morning—covered by another. The man bore it with as much tenderness as if it had been a child.

"Good morning," said Walter, taking out his pen-knife, and carefully cutting off the finest rose he could find in the landlord's garden.

The gamekeeper was in a dilemma; instinct sent one of his hands towards his cap, but something rolling from between the cabbage-leaves warned him that politeness must yield to the safety of his burden. It was a strawberry.

Walter smiled. There were no strawberry-beds in the garden of The Five Adzes, and no doubt its habitué, the gamekeeper, knew that as well as he. Mademoiselle Clari was not to go without at least one simple luxury, after all.

"You seem to have got a fine lot of strawberries there," said Walter, "to judge from the specimen—the one on the ground, I mean."

"They would have been, sir, if the rain hadn't drowned 'em. But I thought the French lady might like a few—such as they be."

"Do you grow them yourself?"

"Bless you! no, sir. I've been a matter of ten mile out and back to get these here."

"Indeed?"

"They'd have been uncommon fine, to be sure, if it hadn't been for the storm. Some out of my lord's, be they."

"My lord's? Lord who?"

"Lord who, sir? No—why my Lord Quorne, to be sure."

"What—is Lord Quorne's place so near? Why, I might have been there myself, by

now. I thought it was a dozen miles away. So those strawberries are Lord Quorne's?"

"They're out of my lord's—leastway, out of my lord's gardener's. And he's a main good sort. He'll always do a good turn for me."

"One good turn deserves another, I suppose. I suppose you don't walk ten miles out and in after strawberries every day?"

"Well, no, sir. If it comes to that, I can't say I do."

"I suppose you want to lay your trophy at her feet with your own hands. Is the lady up yet?" he asked the girl who acted as chamber-maid, boots, waiter, and even as ostler. She had looked a good-tempered girl enough overnight, but did not look in harmony with the laugh of the morning—more especially as her eyes fell upon the cabbage-leaves.

"Oh, she's up, sir. And so's a bottle of ginger-pop with a gooseberry in."

The gamekeeper was not too stolid not to see where the girl's eyes fell; and he looked nearly as sheepish as when he had been called upon to sing.

"Allow me," said Walter Gordon, with the gravest politeness, handing her the rose. "I have walked all the way to the nearest rose-bush to gather it for you. It's out of my own garden—leastway, out of my own landlord's garden, as my friend here would say."

"Oh, there's lots of roses for them that wants 'em. P'rhaps the French lady'd like a rose—if a lady she is. I don't call her one."

"Why, what's the matter? What has she been doing now?"

"I don't say but what she don't like strawberries. There's lots like that sort of rubbish, without being ladies. Oh, I never heard tell of a lady sitting drinking and smoking, with a lot of men that ought to be at home with their wives—they that's got them. And them that hasn't are mostly fools."

"I've no doubt my friend here will take the hint. I'm sure he couldn't do better."

"Oh, I'm not meaning him. He may do what likes him, and 'twill like me."

"You mean the sexton?"

"The sexton!"

"Or me?"

"Them the cap fits, let 'em wear it," said the girl, making the most of her parting shot, and vanishing elsewhere.

"One night in a village—and already with all the hedgers and ditchers at her

feet, and all the women by the ears!" thought Walter Gordon. "It is a real comedy. Come, my man; never mind a breeze. What's her name—Peggy—"

"Jenny, sir," said the gamekeeper, with a hang-dog look on his honest face, and a sort of a sigh.

"Jenny—you will make it all right with a ribbon. Come and give mademoiselle your strawberries."

"P'r'aps, sir, you'd best take 'em in, if you wouldn't mind."

"No, no. That would never do. In the first place, I haven't walked ten miles for them. And in the second, you mustn't give way to Miss Jenny's whims. Come—I'll see that she only eats the strawberries; not you."

Mademoiselle Clari's breakfast was laid in the only available room—that is to say, in the sanded parlour, still reeking with the fumes of stale shag and last night's beer. And it was plain enough that something besides jealousy was at the root of Jenny's ill-humour. Temper is catching.

It was a downright thunder-cloud, with signs of lightning, that hung over the face of the prima donna. She was fiercely sullen, and swept the sand about with tragic dignity. What had happened? Even Walter Gordon paused before he ventured on a "Good morning."

"Ah, so it is you!" declaimed Mademoiselle Clari almost in recitative, or at any rate, in that rhythmic volume that marks southern anger—when, as now and then happens, it does not scream. "Perhaps you call this an auberge. It is a trap of brigands. Gran Dio! What place of horror is this—yes, of horror!"

"What is it? Is it anything I can help you?"

"P'r'aps the lady will accept of these here," said the gamekeeper, plucking up courage by the roots, so to speak, and addressing the enraged prima donna at second hand through Walter Gordon. "They'd have been finer but for the storm, but they're out of my—"

What evil genius could have driven him to speak just then?

"What have I to want with your strawberries, imbecile?" said the prima donna, with sublime scorn. "Take them away. I asked for no strawberries. It is because I do not want them, therefore you bring them. I ask for coffee, it is my life, et voilà! They bring me soot, monsieur."

Was this the same Clari who had last night won all hearts by her graciousness?

Walter was not particularly amused, but he could not keep from a smile at the rueful visage of his friend the gamekeeper, who had walked ten miles and offended his lady-love, and all in vain.

And yet, even in the midst of this storm in a coffee-cup, there was that about Clari which raised the elements of farce into the region of tragedy. A queen denouncing rebellion could have done no more; and in the effect it was impossible altogether to remember the cause. It was whim—caprice—but it was passion, intense and genuine. It made one speculate, a little uneasily, what the result would be if she had real cause for anger. Surely in that case there would be tragedy indeed.

Walter Gordon looked at the coffee-cup, which certainly did not look tempting.

"It is not good," he said sympathetically. "But, you know, one must always follow the custom of the country, mademoiselle. I only wonder that in Laxton you should get coffee at all."

"I have lived to fall among savages! They have only one chaise—one gig—and Prosper takes it and leaves me here. I sleep on a bed—O gran Dio!—I ask for coffee, they make me soot; and they comfort me with strawberries!"

Clearly there was nothing to be done. Walter nodded a hint of withdrawal to the gamekeeper, and threw open the window, a real comfort that did not seem to have occurred, with all her delicacy, to Mademoiselle Clari. It was her way, he began to think, to care only for the impossible—until it was gained.

She still paced up and down the room, exclaiming at intervals both in French and Italian, altogether heedless of the sunshine, perfumed with roses and carnations, that streamed in. He rang for his own breakfast. It was brought in by Jenny, who bounced in, banged down everything at once on the table, and bounced out again without a word. Last night it had been storm without and sunshine within; the atmospheric conditions were reversed to-day.

Still she marched backward and forward, with the train of her extravagant travelling costume sweeping and gathering all the sand, and worse, of the bar-parlour's next morning. Walter ate his eggs and bacon and drank his ale with a fine appetite, unobtrusively observing Mademoiselle Clari the while. And, as he observed her, there somehow dawned upon him a memory. He had never, till last night,

seen Mademoiselle Clari's eyes; and yet last night was not the first time that he had seen the eyes of Mademoiselle Clari.

Filled with fire as they were, they were yet more striking in their dark and yet luminous depth than ever; and they seemed connected in his mind—was it with Manchester? Paris? Oxford? Jena? Rome? Lindenheim? Surely, Lindenheim. And with Irma? Lotte?

Ah! where, then, had Celia March been all this while? He had not forgotten her; but then where were all the rest, either—"Where are the snows of yester-year?" Lindenheim was not famous for the endurance of love or friendship. Yester-year's snows melt as surely elsewhere as at Lindenheim; but they do melt more quickly there. Still, Celia had been Celia. She had touched a little bit of his heart, and not merely his fancy, during that long walk to Waaren and home again. And they had been friends. But he had never heard of her having made a career; he had not heard of her for years. It was strange, for, of all the Lindenheim students, he remembered her voice as having been the most promising, as well as the most beautiful. And now he remembered her eyes also. And he remembered also an old fancy of his, that, if they ever grew to be filled with passion, they would be strangely like—what he saw now.

Apart from her eyes and her tragic intensity of expression, anger, or sunlight, or both, did not improve the appearance of the *prima donna*. She certainly looked two full years older than the night before, and her complexion needed artificial light for its beauty. That, and the parlour, were the only things that did not share in the sparkling freshness of the sunshine after rain. That her personal toilette was not arranged very exquisitely was not to be expected under the circumstances. He himself had benefited more by his involuntary shower-baths than by any supply of water with which Jenny had supplied him; and he knew that foreign ladies do not require such large washing-basins as their English sisters. But he would have thought that, beside all other discomforts, the loss of a cup of coffee might well have been borne.

While he looked, however, the storm cleared away—not gradually, but in one instant. A gracious smile broke out all over her face, and left not one trace of a cloud behind. Walter Gordon was actually startled by the transition.

"You people of Laxton are so funny," she said, as she seated herself at the open window.

"Well, mademoiselle, we have our oddities. Perhaps we are vain of them."

"The song last night was too adorable."

"We consider it a very fine song."

"But how strange! You are of Laxton, and you have heard me—and you say at Vienna?"

"Is it so strange?"

"And you do not speak like the others—not at all."

"I suppose we all have our little mysteries, mademoiselle. For example, you are at Laxton. That is stranger than my having been at Vienna."

"Not at all. I come from the railroad, I was to be met, and I find I have mistook the day. There is all the wonder. What is yours?"

"Why I heard you at Vienna? Simply because I was there. You would not expect me to be there, and not hear you?"

"What did you hear me sing?"

"Lucrezia."

"Ah, that is a fine part for me! I can feel myself in tragedy. I am glad you heard me in Lucrezia. Only in Vienna it was always used to be spoiled. Do you like Waldmann?"

"Well—"

"You may tell the truth to me. I hate her. And she is a German. I hope you did not applaud Waldmann."

"Do you mean musical hatred or personal, mademoiselle?"

"How? I only know one kind of hate, I. It is all one."

"I should not like you to hate me, mademoiselle. I think I should be afraid. You made me think very much about Lucrezia, just now."

"Ah, the coffee? Yes; it annoyed me. I do not like to be put out in my ways. But that was nothing. That hurt nobody."

"I'm afraid there was one, though, whom you hurt very much indeed. I doubt if he will recover it all his days."

"No?"

There was a little eagerness in her tone, as if she was pleased.

"It was the singer of last night, you know. Poor fellow, he walked ten miles this morning only to get you some strawberries for your breakfast, and you would not look at them. And that hurt him. We keep feelings in Laxton, madame, though we don't keep coffee."

"Ah—I cannot bear to hurt feelings;

and of the poor—it is a shame. And he sang that song? And walked ten miles for me? Is it true?"

"Quite true."

"Here is my purse, monsieur. You know money. Give him what you will."

"H'm. I think—somehow—that he would prefer your taking the strawberries."

"Oh, I will eat them all. I cannot bear to hurt; it hurts me. Call him in. He has not gone?"

There was no mistaking her eagerness to heal the wounded feelings of the game-keeper. Walter Gordon went out to look for him, and found him, as he expected, not far from Jenny. He came in bashfully, but not quite so uneasily as before.

"You have brought me strawberries," said the prima donna with eager graciousness. "I did not know—I was annoyed. May I have them?"

The man coloured as red as fire.

"The strawberries, miss?" he stammered.

"Yes—I want them now."

"I'm—I'm uncommon sorry—miss, I am—but—I thought you didn't care for them things, maybe—and so—well, I just gave 'em to Jenny. And so, you see, miss, she—"

"Ate them," said Walter Gordon, "and gave you the rose I gave her? I see. Well—such is constancy, mademoiselle. You see the proof of it in his buttonhole."

The keeper looked down at his own coat; and sure enough the rose was there.

#### BLUE-COAT BUMBLEDOM.

"I NEVER was more convinced of anything in my life," said the gentleman in the white waistcoat, who, with other members of the board of guardians, was debating with what penalty Oliver Twist's request "for more" should be visited. "I never was more convinced of anything in my life, than I am that that boy will come to be hung." The spirit of Bumbledom may thrive elsewhere than in a workhouse school, and the sentiment of virtuous animosity against what Mr. Bumble called the "perwersity" of the poor starved wretches who insisted upon dying in the street, may possess a loftier court of enquiry than that convened to sit upon poor Oliver's preposterous demand. It would be irreverent and possibly unjust to compare the principles of the

investigation conducted by the four distinguished gentlemen nominated by Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Home Department, into the circumstances attending the death of a little blue-coat boy, and the general character of the institution at which he was educated, with the mode in which their proceedings were regulated by the board whose members were, according to Mr. Bumble, each of them, father and mother to the destitute orphans that came in their way. It cannot, however, be denied that between the results of the two inquisitorial methods there is a close resemblance. William Arthur Gibbs did not, indeed, in the sense in which the gentleman in the white waistcoat gave utterance to the prediction, "come to be hung." He saved the laws of his country, and their administrative and executive instruments, the trouble which the accomplishment of that prophecy would have involved. The child Gibbs did not "come to be hung," simply because he hanged himself.

Why he resorted to that desperate expedient; whether a system under which a boy of twelve does with premeditation slip a halter over his neck, and launch himself upon the invisible future, can be sound, or healthy, or worthy of its historic origin and traditions—these were the questions which three privy councillors—two of whom have been cabinet ministers—the Dean of the most distinguished society in the oldest and most famous university of England, and an enlightened member of parliament, who is the chief proprietor of the greatest newspaper in the world, and who, as politician and country gentleman, has done as much good as any other individual in his generation, were called upon to examine and to answer. If a body thus composed could not have been trusted to conduct its investigation in a strictly business-like manner, in the name of common sense, what body could? But the policy which they employed was calculated from the very first to alienate popular confidence and to awake suspicion. They set about their work, not as men whose duty it was to investigate a great scandal, without fear or without favour, in the clear light of day, but as if they were a species of Star Chamber, the first object of whose policy was inviolable and mysterious secrecy. If there be any institution in England which is, or which ought to be, a national one, it is Christ's Hospital. Had it been a country grammar school, the commissioners could not have addressed themselves to

their work in a method arguing a more imperfect idea of their responsibilities. Metropolitan vestries, to say nothing of parliamentary committees, admit the reporters of the daily press. Here were five gentlemen called upon to sift the cause of a horrible catastrophe, involving issues of the utmost moment to the English public, who elected, and who were permitted, to sit with closed doors. At last they have issued their report; they issued it, indeed, a few weeks ago. All that can be said is, that the document corresponds to the anticipations which, under such circumstances, we should have been led to form, and it is as unsatisfactory as was the mode of the enquiry itself. The conclusions to which it points are three in number. First, that the government of Christ's Hospital, though it has much improved of late years, is not yet quite perfection; secondly, that the authorities upon whom the task of government devolves—treasurer, warden, headmaster, masters, beadles, dames, monitors—were all of them as near perfection as possible; thirdly, that the boy Gibbs was an ill-conditioned, unruly, mendacious urchin, and that he hanged himself in a spirit of "perversity," to spite the powers that be of Christ's Hospital in general, and a certain upper boy with whom he had specially to do in particular.

Never has the noble art of "how not to do it" been illustrated so completely as in the transactions of this commission. The official report which a commission, appointed by the cabinet of the day, issues is usually a more or less lucid and emphatic declaration of the opinion of the commissioners, based upon certain data, in the shape of the recorded testimony of witnesses, also included in the volume which contains that report. In the present case there is offered not even a précis of the examination of witnesses by the commissioners. No complete list is even given of the names of these witnesses; the commissioners state their own conclusions as to the death of the boy Gibbs and the existing state of things at the school in Newgate-street, and nothing more. Gibbs told his father and his sister that the life at school was utterly intolerable; that the tortures inflicted on him by some of his senior schoolfellows were so systematic and odious as to render life a burden which he could not support. It is clear that the commissioners have either—because they discovered that the dead boy's

word was not uniformly trustworthy—abstained from specially enquiring into this fact, or else that they have, for some reason of their own, declined to publish what the result of their enquiries on this point was. They content themselves with assuring us that the boy whose name has been unfavourably associated with that of Gibbs was all that a Christ's Hospital monitor should be; that he had high principles; and that, though he offended against the laws of the school, which forbid a monitor to strike another boy, his offence—both in degree, we suppose, and in kind—was sanctioned by custom. The commissioners have, as it seems to us, gone out of their way to assume a responsibility which is exclusive and invidious. The public wanted to be informed on certain specific facts, minutely and circumstantially. It did not want the mere ipsi dixerunt of five gentlemen of honour, irreproachable character, and immense experience. The issue, as has been said, was weighty, yet it was comparatively simple: Under precisely what combination of circumstances did the boy Gibbs come to hang himself? That issue is diligently avoided, and in lieu of grappling with it, or, at least, of proving unmistakably to all the world that they have grappled with it, the commissioners are satisfied with indicating grave faults in the organisation and management of Christ's Hospital, and suggesting remedies sufficiently drastic, indeed, but, at the same time, sufficiently obvious. The report is, in fine, a document after Mr. Bumble's own heart.

"Thank heavens," said an old Blue, writing to the newspapers the other day, "that the Christ's Hospital of my time has ceased to exist!" "I look back," almost simultaneously wrote another old Blue, "to my days at Christ's Hospital with gratitude, affection, and delight." Well, let us hope that the sentiments entertained and expressed by the letters of these two correspondents, are those which the retrospect most naturally excites. Yet there is too much to make us believe that the Christ's Hospital as it is even now, must cease to exist before it can be anything like the Christ's Hospital which ought to be. There is nothing in the perusal of the annals of the school, suggestive of that sense of picturesque relief which one experiences in turning over the records of all the other great schools of the country. Its traditions are ancient,

its associations venerable, but, like the costume of the scholars, they have little to commend them to the imagination, except the fact that they are old. The reminiscences of old Blues are confined to a limited and austere area, and are pent-up within hoary but gloomy precincts. The recollections of their school-days have none of those bright spots on which the memory in after years lovingly dwells. Coleridge and Lamb tell us of happy days spent when they wore the gown. But, they were spent not in the hospital, nor in any place connected with it; not in school, cricket-field, or playground; but in suburban expeditions to the leafy glades of Epping, or along the flowery banks of the Thames. Christ's Hospital has no playing-fields, has no kind of playground, except the dingy enclosure that is barred in from the dingy and narrow street. The Christ's Hospital boys do not play like other boys; they contract a dislike for such sports, as they cannot practise in the forlorn and forbidding palestra attached to the establishment. School enjoyments, by the side of school discipline and studies, are unknown. There are the streets of the great City, with its endless roar, hard by, where they are sometimes free to wander. But as for the routine of school life, it is a round of joyless monotony; distasteful; frequently painful in actual experience; unattractive in the retrospect.

Even cheery Leigh Hunt fails to convince us that he had really any of that tenderness for Christ's Hospital which boys, when they have become men, do, as a matter of fact, not unfrequently feel for their old school. He writes a panegyric on it, but it is the sort of panegyric that might be expected from a man who writes to order: his praise is stiff, formal, unreal, forced. He speaks of it in conventional language, and in artificial periods, as the "most truly English foundation in the country"—taking that word to mean what Englishmen wish it to mean—something solid, unpretending and free to all. . . Christ's Hospital is a nursery of tradesmen, of merchants, of naval officers, of scholars; it has produced some of the greatest ornaments of their time, and the feeling among the boys themselves is, that it is a medium between the patrician pretension of such schools as Eton and Westminster, and the plebeian submission of the charity schools." Now, this sort of writing has about it an unmistakable falsetto note, and generally it may be said that, except,

indeed, in some of the correspondence which recent proceedings have elicited, old Blues express themselves gratefully, rather than affectionately, as to the character of the institution at which they were educated. Coleridge's reminiscences of the place centre almost exclusively in the draconic headmaster of his youthful days, the Rev. James Boyer; an admirable teacher, but something more than a severe disciplinarian, and of whom Lamb writes: "Though sufficiently removed from the jurisdiction of Boyer, we were near enough to understand a little of his system. We occasionally heard sounds of the ululantes, and caught glimpses of Tartarus. . . I have known him double his knotty fist at a poor trembling child (the maternal milk hardly dry upon its lips), with a 'Sirrah! do you presume to set your looks at me?' In his gentler moods, when the rabid furor was assuaged, he had resort to an ingenious method, peculiar to himself, of whipping a boy, and reading the debates at the same time—a paragraph and a lash between." To come to Charles Lamb himself, his first impressions at Christ's Hospital would, in all probability, only have been too readily endorsed by poor little William Arthur Gibbs.

"I was," writes Lamb, "a hypochondriac lad; and the sight of a boy in pillory, upon the day of my first putting on the blue clothes, was not exactly fitted to assuage the natural terror of initiation. I was told that he had run away. This was the punishment for the first offence. As a novice, I was soon after taken to see the dungeons. These were little square Bedlam cells, where a boy could just lie at his length upon straw and a blanket, with a peep of light let in askance from a prison orifice. Here the poor boy was locked in by himself all day, without sight of any but the porter, who brought him his bread and water, who might not speak to him; or of the beadle, who came twice a week to call him out to receive his periodical chastisement, which was almost welcome, because it separated him for a brief interval from solitude; and here he was shut up by himself of nights, out of the reach of any sound, to suffer whatever horrors the weak nerves and superstition incident to his time of life might subject him to."

Who shall say that this may not be a true description of the sufferings that the boy Gibbs endured on the night previous to the fatal morrow, during which he was confined alone in the school infirmary?

The matron says that the child eat an excellent breakfast before he carried out the self-ordained sentence. But there is surely nothing unusual in that. The child's mind, the alleged excellence of his appetite notwithstanding, may have been as full of terrors on that fatal morning, and through the hours of darkness which ushered it in, as that of the miserable creature who asks for a pint of beer, "which was immediately supplied him," before the final interview with Mr. Marwood.

But now what was the state of things, and what were the customs, which even the commissioners are compelled to admit were unsatisfactory at Christ's Hospital, while all the individuals concerned were blameless? This is almost the exact language of the report. Yet surely it involves something like a contradiction in terms. If the customs of Christ's Hospital result now and then in the suicide of a scholar, surely for this usage some definite persons are responsible — the beadle, the masters, or the governors. Not so, argue the gentlemen appointed by Mr. Cross to enquire into the matter. They lay the blame on what is really an abstraction. So recently as the time of Lamb and Coleridge the care bestowed upon the health and cleanliness, and as a rule, upon the education of the boys, was scandalously insufficient. The great reforms which are the modern boast of the institution date from 1856. The picture of Christ's Hospital, as it is given us by the commissioners, may be accepted as true in every respect. The foundation provides board and education for about eight hundred boys. About twenty-five of these boys are Grecians or deputy Grecians — lads of the age of sixteen and upwards, selected according to merit, and educated for the universities. The maximum age of the other boys is fifteen, scholars being transferred from the school at Hertford to the school in Newgate-street, at the age of twelve. From the mass of the senior scholars — those verging on the advanced age of fifteen — the monitors are chosen, and to them such power as the masters can give is delegated. Till a few years ago there was no head-master at Christ's Hospital. Even now the head-master is an official who exists only in name. Formerly entitled grammar-master, he is responsible for the industry and the behaviour of the boys in school. The warden has the sole charge

of them out of school hours, and is assisted in the work of supervision by beadles and porters. Over and above both warden and head-master, is the treasurer; who not only has a handsome residence on the premises, receives, disburses, and accounts for all moneys belonging to the institution, is chairman of all committees, his voice having more weight at their proceedings than that of anyone else, but acts in every respect as the resident-governor of the hospital, and is the managing director of the fifty gentlemen who compose the committee of almoners. This committee is that of the supreme governing body of the school, chooses and dismisses the head-master and his assistants, and is the ultimate tribunal of appeal on all points. There are sixteen sleeping wards, in which order is kept by a matron, with two monitors to help her; a Grecian in most instances being held in reserve, to interfere as a *deus ex machinâ* if any special disturbance should arise. To sum up: the monitors are the only connecting link between the authorities of the schoolroom and the authorities of the playground and sleeping-wards. They are recognised by the masters, and are recognised also by the warden, matron, and beadles. The law prohibits the infliction by them of corporal punishment on the boys who form the rank and file of the school, but custom sanctions it, and the opinion of the commissioners is that the custom must be allowed. For the rest, there is something worse and more confusing than any mere system of dual government. The head-master conflicts with the warden, and both are really responsible to the treasurer. The warden and treasurer may be, and according to the commissioners have recently been, quite exemplary. But when the boys are out of school, they are either turned into the dismal playground, or into the London streets. At this stage the authority of Mr. Bumble supervenes. The beadles treat them, not as lads who may and should some day or other grow up to be English gentlemen, but as charity boys. The commissioners are not quite enamoured of the beadle system, but so long as the school is in London they do not see their way to recommend its abolition.

This is not the first time that the transfer of the hospital from the heart of London has been suggested. In 1870 a proposal for it was negatived, in a court of one hundred and forty governors, only by fourteen votes. It is quite clear that,

under its present local conditions, with no cricket-field, football-field, or river, Christ's Hospital, being exclusively a boarding-school, can never be conducted decently, and is sure to continue a hotbed of bullying of the worst description. Let the governors of Christ's Hospital seriously ponder, not only the recommendation of the commission, but the example of the Charter House, which flourishes apace in the new home at Godalming. Further, if a correspondent of *The Times*, writing under date August 14, is correct, the governors might actually find purchasers for their present site in Newgate-street. But there are other matters to settle besides the future habitat of the school, or the possibility of abolishing the beadles. The monitorial system, as it exists at Christ's Hospital, is utterly rotten, and must either be reconstructed, or else reformed off the face of the earth. To connive, as the authorities of Christ's Hospital, according to their own showing, do connive, at a state of things under which small boys of fourteen and fifteen maul and maltreat each other, is to give a charter to sheer cruelty, and to encourage abuses which exist in no other school in England. At Eton there is fagging—the power to fag being confined to the sixth and the fifth forms—though public opinion, as well as physical experience, is reducing the asperity of the fag system every day. As for the monitorial system, it can only be said to be recognised at Eton in a very qualified shape, the captain of each house being honourably expected by the head-master to keep things straight; and in theory or practice, a certain moral responsibility attaches to every member of the sixth form. At Harrow the monitorial system is in full force, and with its results there we may have something to say on another occasion. At Winchester a prefect may cane on his own responsibility. At Westminster no caning can be inflicted without the power of the head-boy of the house. These are all of them varieties of that monitorial régime which was elaborated by Arnold of Rugby, with a view first to teach boys habits of manliness, independence, and honesty, by permitting them to govern themselves; secondly, to prevent bullying, by specifying and defining the power which boys should exercise over each other. With a man of Arnold's influence and force of character, and with upper boys such as he contrived to manufacture, the prefectorial

scheme may perhaps be trusted to work well. In a general way there is not much to be said for it; and the school in which it is formally dispensed with—Eton—is, for its size, the most humane of all.

But it is not necessary to go into any lengthy arguments on this more general feature in public-school discipline, to be assured that the apology for the monitorial system, which events have brought to light in Christ's Hospital, is wholly and solely bad. The first thing is to transplant the entire establishment some thirty or forty miles out of London; to abolish the beadles; to make the head-master supreme over all, and to make him, and him alone, independently of treasurer or president, answerable for the education and the discipline of the school. If prefectorial power in any shape is to be exercised, it should be exclusively vested in the Grecians; and the monitors, as they now are, must be clean swept away. Fresh air, healthy surroundings, the opportunities of cheering pastimes and invigorating games, the consciousness of a corporate life out of school as well as in it, a life in which every boy will not be as an Ishmaelite with his hand against his fellow—these are the first essential conditions to which Christ's Hospital must be accommodated. As matters are, a noble institution is dominated by the despotic spirit of Bumbledom, and until that evil genius is exorcised, the school must be impotent for half the good which it should effect.

#### A CHAPTER ON SILK.

THE two Greek monks who, hiding a handful of silkworms' eggs within the hollow of a cane, eluded the lynx-eyed officers of the Chinese custom-house, and robbed the Flowery Land of its most cherished monopoly, could hardly have known how immense was the boon which their evasion of the revenue laws conferred upon the Roman Empire of the East. Previous to this act of pious smuggling, Europe, Persia, and even India were dependent on the pigtailed producers of Kathay for every pound of the raw material. Pagan Rome, like Tyre or Persepolis, had to be content with such silk as the monsoons enabled Moormen and Gentoos to carry in their square-sailed craft from the Yellow to the Red Sea.

The small store of the silken seed which the Greek monks brought home

proved fruitful exceedingly, and presently Constantinople, not Canton or Nankin, became the centre of the silk-trade and the chief seat of what speedily rose to the dignity of a national industry. Thrace and Hellas, the Ionian provinces of Asia Minor, and, above all, Cyprus and Syria, possessed a climate admirably suited to the new cultivation, and to the growth of the mulberry-tree. They had, too, the advantage of a numerous population of gentle, patient workers, well fitted to make the most of this novel source of wealth.

For hundreds of years Byzantine silk was as well known in the marts of East and West as that of Lyons is now. The inroads of the Turk, and of barbarous invaders, Avar, Oghur, and Bulgar, less known than the Turk, gradually dried up the well-springs of prosperity. Every year saw a lessening of the area of cultivation, a diminution in the number of buyers, as fertile lands were laid waste, and fair cities plundered, until at last the headquarters of silk production were in the Lebanon, out of reach, for awhile, of the Paynim robber.

Silk, like tobacco, had to face what might be called the personal hatred of enemies who were in a position to give practical effect to their antipathy. The Gothic conquerors, such as Alaric, had taken to it kindly enough. But the fierce Attila proscribed it, and the rulers of Islam denounced it with a Puritanic fervour of bitter contempt. The austere Caliph Abubekr ordered such Moslems as were strutting in silken garb—part of the “loot” of captured Greek towns—to be rolled ignominiously in the mire, as unworthy believers. Grim Omar's footstool was not to be approached by Emir or Kaimakam, glistening in the effeminate robes from the Syrian loom. But fashion, as usual, got the better of sumptuary laws, and silk was soon in as high demand in Bagdad or Cairo, as ever it had been in Christian Antioch or Damascus.

Singularly enough, sericulture was not an art which commended itself to the wealthy and industrious Italy of the Middle Ages, and that in spite of the fact that Milan, Mantua, and Florence supplied half Christendom with holiday clothes. Lombard and Tuscan weavers looked to the Orient for silk, as they looked to England and Spain for wool. Mulberries were planted in Italy, as they were planted in France, by some exceptionally far-sighted prince or statesman,

but the systematic rearing of silkworms dates from a period more recent than that which saw the great city commonwealths flourishing in their free splendour.

As the steadiness of the demand called into being fresh sources of supply, and as France grew larger and more powerful, the once Imperial town of Lyons began to claim a silken precedence.

From the earliest dawn of the Renaissance the silk manufacture had been, with French kings, a petted industry. Shrewd, sordid Louis the Eleventh tried to make Tours rival Pisa. Superb Francis the First desired that the Gallic shuttle, as well as the Gallic spear, should conquer the foreign competitor. And, Free Trade being as undreamed of as the steam-horse and the electric wire, the manufactures of aliens were very heavily handicapped by protective duties, while France learned to dress, no longer in the Spanish or the Italian, but distinctively in the French style. We in England, who reared no worms and carded no silk, were not debarred by national jealousy from dealing with the foreigner.

It needs an effort to carry our minds back to the time, when the Spitalfields weaver was a new institution in the land, and Bethnal-green but lately colonised by immigrants from France. The blind bigotry of Louis the Fourteenth had driven into exile thousands of skilled workmen, and England was eager to profit by the influx of French Protestants. To London came the Cevennes peasant, dragooned out of house and home for the crime of attending a conventicle; the Lyons weaver, who had risked the galleys for conscience's sake; the Huguenot mill-owner, smarting under fine and imprisonment. And it was really believed that Spitalfields, and Macclesfield, and Coventry, and Nottingham might outstrip France in that branch of industry which then seemed the most distinctively French.

Some ill luck, however, blighted, almost from the first, the effort to establish a thriving manufacture of English silken goods. The raw material was dear; there were no British silkworms to feed the looms of London and Cheshire; Lyons far excelled Spitalfields in capital, taste, and skill. It was in vain that a sympathetic House of Commons acceded to the saddling of foreign products with additional dues. Even in the heat of the wars that rarely slackened, Mr. William Watch and his compeers contrived to

defraud both the King's exchequer and the British silk-weaver, by delivering, duty free, French goods that had never been subjected to the formality of a Customs' examination.

Meanwhile hostile tariffs and chronic misgovernment had reduced the production of Italian silk to very moderate proportions. In Asia the same causes were at work. Samarcand no longer sent its costly bales to Europe. Cities, once resounding with the hum and click of beam and shuttle, were now heaps of owl-haunted ruin. Genghis and Timour left few living witnesses of their triumphant march, and either slaughtered artisans wholesale, or transplanted them to far-off settlements in the Steppes. Petty tyrants gleaned where these illustrious destroyers had plied the scythe, and the Venetian wharves were no longer encumbered by merchandise from the dusky East. The direct commerce with China was difficult and tardy; Italy sank yearly deeper into a slough of sloth and superstition, and all things seemed to point to a French monopoly of the silk trade.

"To make a civet," says the homely French proverb, "we want a hare;" and to manufacture ribbons, and rich brocade, and bright taffety, and shimmering satin, and substantial poult de soie, we require the silkworm, and the silkworm's eggs, the promise of a new harvest. A delicate creature is the silkworm, and one impossible to rear, save under favourable sanitary conditions. He must be kept warm. He must have plenty of pure air. His diet must be cared for with lavish assiduity. Too much care cannot be taken to keep him clean; to shield him from hot sun and cold wind, from damp, from bird and insect; to avoid overcrowding; and to ensure gentle usage and discreet management for the infant worm. He must have fresh leaves to eat, a ventilated dwelling, a nicely-regulated temperature, if you would have him thrive; and even then he remains a tender thing, that a breath may kill.

The fragile nature of the silkworm, and the difficulty of prolonging the life of the creature from the nursery epoch until the proud day when its silken shroud is self-spun, and its larva condition at an end, has often occasioned both philosophers and practical men to seek for a hardier substitute. The silkworm is not the only silk producer. Sundry caterpillars, and many spiders, when properly fed, furnish silk at will, and the webs of the great

birdcatching Arachnidae of South America, for instance, are superior in strength and texture to the smoothest cocoons which the pampered and tender Bombyx can supply. The ferocity of the spider, however, proved fatal to all attempts to turn a penny by converting Arachne into a spinning-jenny. One patient projector collected a grand army of four thousand spiders, but the ingenious Amazons devoured one another, and soon but a few remained alive. And then it requires twelve female spiders to do the work of one silkworm, and twenty-seven thousand would be required to yield a pound of silk.

At Lyons and Montpellier efforts have been made to get rid of the silkworm, as an obnoxious middleman, altogether, and to extract his shining thread directly from the fibre of the mulberry leaves and bark. And these efforts obtained a qualified scientific, if not a commercial, success. The mulberry-tree, properly invoked, will give us silk, without our being under any obligation to the worm. But the process is troublesome, and the silk ligneous, of poor colour, and in short lengths. Another bold inventor took out a patent for cast silk, dissolving, spreading, and drying the rough raw material, so as to save the price of machinery and the wages of the operative; but his partial triumph, also, ended in pecuniary failure. In the present state of science we cannot dispense with the services of worm or weaver.

No domestic animal fattens so rapidly as the silkworm. Give him his choice, and he will prefer the lettuce to even the white mulberry, as he likes the white leaves better than the red, and the red leaves better than our common English black. Lettuce leaves, however, imply a whiter and weaker silk, and a deficiency of healthy silk moths and the invaluable eggs. The leaf of the white mulberry, which does not suit our soil and climate, is the true food of the true silkworm. In warm countries it is not indispensable that he should spend his little life in a house. A mulberry grove will harbour a vast population of the crawling alchemists, that turn vegetable fibre into sheeny silk. But such a grove needs careful netting, to protect the toothsome white tid-bits from the beaks of birds; while it is difficult to collect the cocoons, and a single thunder-shower or dust-storm means ruin to the harvest.

The magnificent silk-farms of North Italy show the domesticated silkworm at his best. In these great nurseries

the worm is watched over with unremitting care, from the moment when, a tiny black thread, he chips the shell, until, a corpulent mass of waddling whiteness, he leaves off eating, and clothes himself in the golden sheathing of the many-threaded cocoon. The noise made by the many thousand worms, as they browse on the fresh-picked leaves, has been not inaptly compared to that caused by grazing sheep, while scores of spindles are ever busy in reeling off the yellow film that is the future grist for the silk-mills of Lyons, Genoa, and Lombardy. Unfortunately, for some quarter of a century past, the silkworm farms of France and Italy have been scourged by a malady, akin to the oidium in vines and to potato disease, under the influence of which the worms sicken and perish by millions.

No care, no isolation, seems to act as a permanent protection to a silkworm colony against the dreaded "pebrine," a disease of fungoid origin, which in a day blights the hopes of a year, and from which, according to the most careful researches of M. Pasteur, few eggs escape without the hereditary taint which will perpetuate the distemper.

Longing eyes were turned towards the native countries of the silkworm—China and Japan—where epidemic disease was unknown, and whence a new and vigorous race of worms might be brought to fill the room of the degenerate Bombyx of Europe. And, as European potato-growers imported fresh seed from Equatorial America, so did the Silkgrowers' Association of Northern Italy look to the far East for the means of restocking their silkworm-nurseries, depopulated by pebrine. The telegraph flashed to Japan a royally liberal order for a hundred thousand pounds' worth of silkworms' eggs, and in due commercial course, via San Francisco, the precious cargo was despatched, eggs and cases turning the scale at the imposing weight of twenty-eight tons. This, it must be remembered, represents but one, although the largest, of the purchases thus made. Times have changed, certainly, since the missionary monks slipped out of China, trembling, with their few poor scores of eggs hidden in the hollow cane!

All manufactures have a tendency, after reaching the culminating point, to decline, and silk has been no exception to the rule. The immensely greater cost of the raw material, brisk competition, and the high wages requisite for the workmen's main-

tenance in times so hard, have been met in part by labour-saving machinery, in part by a perhaps necessary rise in price, and thirdly, it is to be feared, by an unscrupulous system of adulteration.

It is quite as easy, nowadays, to find pure wine, as to meet with unsophisticated silk. And, as we drink drugged sherry and doctored claret, as we eat our beef with mock mustard, and whet our jaded appetite with pernicious pickles, so do our wives and daughters pay heavy bills for nominal silk. Real taffetas or glacé, the material of which costs avowedly thirty per cent. more than that of the thick and imposing failles and gros grains, is sedulously kept in the background at Messrs. Cash and Squander's emporium. If asked for, it is slightly pronounced "old-fashioned," and unworthy of a customer's attention. What finds favour with the linen-draper is a stiff, solid, dull fabric, that must blush to hear itself proclaimed as brocade at ever so much a yard, and into the composition of which there enters much cotton and a little wool.

It is not the gown-piece alone which is a pretender to a style and title unjustly usurped. Ladies may sigh for the honest silk stockings which their grandmothers bought for a third of what Blandish and Co., the eminent outfitters, now charge for an inferior article. Skeins and reels do not comprise the good measure, and strong, bright thread, that they used to do. Scarf, and ribbon, and handkerchief, and necktie, are too often expensive impostors, with no fair claim to derive their pedigree from the silkworm. The very worst, as well as the very best, of silks now come to us from France, and, as chambers of commerce have more than once pointed out, there are certain qualities of silken goods still manufactured in England, the superior purity of which, were they but known, would ensure them a ready sale on the Continent itself.

#### FOUNTAIN VIOLET.

##### A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

GRACE is a sweet name. I have been always curiously fond of Grace. A trio of sisters thus called, popular in antiquity, were no less distinguished for personal attractions than for purity of life and manners. At the state-balls of Olympus, of which they were among the chief ornaments, there is reason to infer that these young ladies, eschewing the chaperonage of their mother, Madame Venus, whose

visiting-list was mixed and comprehensive, or of their father, Signor Bacchus, whose too-convivial habits occasionally gave uneasiness to his friends, placed themselves under the protection of the ladies Diana and Minerva; and thus, with the powerful safeguard of innocence and wisdom, braved in security the social perils of the time.

Modern history has chimed in melodiously with the records of old. Observe that, in mediæval times, little is heard of any Graces. They withdraw into a modest shade. It is a circumstance that tells immensely in their favour. Your true Grace was a flower too pure and delicate for the parterres of that garish day. Only when the painted and bedizened queens of the garden were swept from the scene, did the Graces re-open their tender-lidded leaves to the sun, and steal back, lovelier than ever, into the welcoming world.

And well have the Graces since vindicated their claim to popular esteem. I fearlessly appeal to all accessible archives in proof of what I allege. How faithful is every Grace, usually, to the traditions of her name! How rarely have we to deplore the coming to serious grief of one so sweetly called! Was ever Grace divorced, except, peradventure, from a lunatic lord? Has society once had to blush for a kleptomaniac Grace? Doth she smoke, or tipple? Is she beheld gloating over the doveicides of Hurlingham, or heard lamenting that her sex (large as is its present latitude) forbids that pastime in which horses' shins are battered, their mouths spoiled, their tempers ruined, and the laws for their supposed protection openly violated, under the name of Polo? Never. Where Grace is, cruelty and self are not. Love, peace, charity, inseparably companion her, and all these are comprehended in her delicious name.

Grace Darling was an appellation worthy of the young heroine who bore it. But when I changed Grace Fairlocks (which became the wearer well) into Grace Sweetlove (which became her better), I flatter myself that, in point of melody, Miss Darling had to yield the palm.

The espousals of Gratia Fairlocks and myself, Adolphus Sweetlove, could not be stigmatised as mercenary. Neither of the contracting parties coveted the other's wealth. Let me be frank. We had, between us, no money at all, or less. For albeit Miss Fairlocks enjoyed a net income of one hundred and thirty pounds a

year, she had impignorated that revenue for three years to come, in consideration of an immediate payment of two hundred and twenty, for the sole purpose, it would appear, of losing this latter sum in a certain undertaking which, on the eve of floating triumphantly into the market, stuck in the mud, and that of so clinging a character, that the directors are not, to this day, purged of the consequences of the immersion.

My own pecuniary resources were even less ample than Grace's. I was, to own the truth, slightly in debt, and, at the epoch of my marriage, I had at my command just thirty-five pounds sterling! For the better comprehension of the following singular tale, I must recur, very briefly, to the circumstances of my ante-nuptial life.

On the death of my parents, which occurred during my absence on service in India, I found myself in the somewhat unusual position of scarcely possessing a blood relation in the world. I could, indeed, boast (but rarely did) of an uncle, my mother's only brother, Mr. Lewcraft. But this gentleman, for all legitimate avuncular ends, might as well have flourished in another age.

Mr. Lewcraft's country seat, Fountain Violet, was perched upon a bleak hill, overlooking the entrance of a western harbour, renowned in past days for sending forth many a hardy mariner, sometimes to defy his country's foes, sometimes its excise, for the very formation of the rocky sea-face, and the character of the adjacent country, marked it out as a spot expressly designed by the foresight of nature for an important "run."

Wherefore "Fountain Violet" no man knew. Fountain there was none; nor even a hedge or bank on the wind-swept down under which a violet could nestle. The edifice itself was, as to its outside, low-browed and forbidding; as to its interior, dark and draughty, full of echoes, strange wind-whistles, and melancholy croaking sounds, as if the aged mansion, conscious of a tendency to collapse, were debating with itself whether it should try yet another tussle with Time.

My uncle had acquired this cheerful property for a very moderate sum; the mansion, in addition to its other attractions, having the reputation of being haunted. Mr. Lewcraft was understood not to discountenance this rumour. Owing, it was whispered, to some grievous wrong or disappointment in early life, the lord of

Fountain Violet lived the life of a misanthrope, and was more than suspected of being a miser too.

An avenue of stunted limes, representing almost the only vegetable life of the domain, communicated with a narrow path winding down the cliff, and ending in a little sheltered cove just within the harbour's mouth, of a size sufficient to contain any vessel up to a hundred tons. Herein lay the link that still connected Mr. Lewcraft with the outer world. He had always loved the sea, and wooed it in all its changeful moods with the serene indulgence of a lover. From a harbour punt he had proceeded to a stout fishing wherry, and at length became the master of a splendid forty-five-ton cutter yacht, now snugly berthed in the little natural harbour just described.

On board this vessel my uncle was known to spend the greater part of his very ample leisure. What he did there, even at times when it was manifestly impossible to put to sea, was a subject of much speculation to the seafaring youth of the neighbourhood, who, weatherbound themselves, devoted their idle hours to vain efforts to penetrate the proceedings of the "Ogre," for by that agreeable title was the lord of Fountain Violet popularly known, partly from his mysterious prowling ways, partly from the fact that the unsparing dentist, Time, had, with cruel pleasantry, punched out every alternate tooth in Mr. Lewcraft's head, thereby imparting to his countenance an aspect of greed and ferocity.

Work of some sort was at all times going on in the Cockatoo. Gossip affirmed that Mr. Lewcraft had conceived a theory connected with the stowage of ballast, which, when perfected, would be likely to work a complete revolution in that essential feature. His table at Fountain Violet was known to be strewn with models, sketches, diagrams, calculations, all bearing upon the point in question. But the nature of the invention, or discovery, was inexorably confined to the proprietor himself, and to a certain shaggy old sea-dog of morose manners, who had obtained his discharge from the coast-guard to take command of the Cockatoo.

I think I have only to add that my uncle's modest establishment, at this period, consisted of an aged cook, believed to have no other name than Louisa (by the itinerant fish merchants, with whom she occasionally drove hard bargains,

roughened into "Squeezers"), and a younger lady who did the meaner chores, and was, thanks to her prodigious stature but scraggy form, familiarly accosted as Maypole Moll.

I fly back, on Love's own wings, to my Grace.

Our formal betrothment, I would here record, took place at the theatre, during a scene in which Mr. Irving (for whom, though I don't know him, I have ever since cherished a warm personal attachment), in a brisk conversation with one Lady Anne, dwelt strongly on the expediency of a sudden and definite engagement. We felt the justice of his arguments, we gazed in each other's eyes, we returned to our respective homes affianced.

Now arose the question of means. At a cabinet council, held in the beautiful gardens of the Star and Garter, Richmond, the budget was exhaustively discussed. Grace and I agreed upon that fusion of our joint possessions known among lawyers as "hotchpot." The expression is happy. It has a cheerful, domestic, simmering sound, as if in happy augury that, come what may, we should never want a dinner. Our spirits rose in proportion. Strong in our genial hotchpot, we should bid defiance to poverty, hunger, and all the lesser ills of the unprovided flesh. Into this dainty little dish each was to dip at pleasure, and to repeat the process until all was gone, except twenty pounds, reserved for our marriage-trip.

There was a sweet and trustful disregard of business in this arrangement, quite in keeping with our frame of mind, and it brought its own reward. If you could have seen my little blushing Gracie's half-arch, half-mournful appeals to the money-box! It was as a sacred shrine, which nothing would have induced her to approach in my absence. Could tills be opened in such bewitching fashion, and five-and-sixpence be extracted by such fairy fingers, I doubt much if any injured proprietor could find it in his heart to invoke the outraged laws. When I discovered that all was gone, save the twenty pounds agreed on, I could hardly regret that the preparation of Gracie's trousseau had left nothing at all for mine.

"Only twenty sovereigns!" sighed Grace, placing those coins on the table, a long way apart, and then weighing each individually on her rosy finger-tip, as if in the vague

hope that one or other, proving to be above weight, might be persuaded to go farther.

"True. That will hardly suffice," I remarked, studying Bradshaw. "By the way, love, have you determined whither we are to fly from the world's gaze?"

"Oh, Dolly, not too far. The money, love—you see!"

"It's the money, love, I don't see, that perplexes me," I replied gloomily. "Some quiet little haunt, not, as you say, too far, yet far enough to enable us to forget that there is any world but that we carry with us. Have you any idea, Miss Fairlocks?"

Gracie hesitated.

"I thought of C—C—"

"Cornwall?"

Gracie uttered a little scream.

"Cornwall—you silly boy! Nonsense. Camberwell."

"Camberwell," I repeated, "by all means; unless, indeed, your ladyship would prefer the solitudes of Wapping! No, love; you have unintentionally decided me. We go to Cornwall."

"But, Dolly, that's the Land's End!"

"It's its only fault," I said apologetically. "The shores are lovely; the living excellent. It rains only four days a week. The Botallack mine is worth the journey, and so is a little white turnip, which refuses, I am told, to grow anywhere but at Marazion. As for the money," I added, recklessly; "pshaw, you'll see!"

Experience had taught me that these last two words, pronounced with authority, exercised an almost magical influence over my fair companion.

"Don't you think, Adolphus," asked Gracie, presently, "that it would be only kind to inform your uncle, Mr. Lewcraft, of our little plan?"

"If, by 'little plan,' you allude, Miss Fairlocks, to the trifling incident of my intended marriage, I see no particular objection, save that ink is expensive, and, having now to consider—"

"Now, be serious; how often, in the course of your life, have you written to this gentleman—your sole relation, sir?"

"Re-peatedly," was my bold reply.

"How often?" persisted my cross-examiner.

"Hem!—thrice."

"What did he answer to the first letter?"

"Nothing."

"To the second?"

"My sole relation continued mute."

"To the last?"

"Mr. Lewcraft forbore reply."

"Adolphus," said Gracie, after a little pause, "to oblige me, try him once more."

"It won't come," I responded, gloomily.

"What won't come?"

"The cheque, love."

"As if I had been thinking of that!" said Gracie, tossing back her glistening locks—ringlets, bless them, were in fashion then. "But write."

We did write—we—for it was a joint effort of authorship, Gracie suggesting the matter, and I the stops; result, a pretty and catching composition, finished off with an ingenious interlacing of those names about to become one.

Grace felt confident that Mr. Lewcraft would incontinently reply, perhaps welcome us to Fountain Violet, and embrace the earliest opportunity, when alone with me—most likely over a bottle of fine old port as crusty as the owner—to say, "My dear boy, here's to you and your sweet little wife. Dolly, we have been too long estranged. Henceforth, be this your home, and, my dear fellow, regard yourself as my heir!"

Without being quite so sanguine, I was certainly conscious of a faint hope, that the step we had announced to him might strike some long-silent chord in the heart of the solitary old man, which might tend to unite us more closely for the future.

An answer did arrive. On the fourth morning, I found on my breakfast-table a letter sealed with family arms, and large enough to have contained marriage settlements, or, at least, drafts of the same. Could my uncle have been so generous? Venerable relative—much misunderstood! The impost demanded by the postal authorities had been twopence, an excess into which Mr. Lewcraft must have been betrayed on no slight grounds. Impatient as I was, I determined that Gracie should be the first recipient of the news, and hurried off, breakfastless, to her home. My darling's eyes sparkled like sapphires, as they lit on the imposing seal. With a glance of timid triumph she tore it open. Out dropped a neatly-folded sheet of thick cartridge-paper, such as is occasionally used for folding up tobacco. Blank? Not quite. In the centre of a page appeared, in my uncle's crabbed characters, his nuptial blessing:

"More fools you!"

"Old br—"

A soft hand stopped my mouth.

"Br—other of my mother, I was about to say," I stammered through the white obstacle; "little do you know, mistaken man, what a niece you have rejected."

Taking Gracie in the first moments of this disappointment, I managed to convince her that the best rejoinder we could make to my uncle's manifesto would be our immediate espousals. Why, in effect, delay? Our minds were made up. There were no wills but our own to consult. By a skilful financial measure, the details of which are not the reader's concern, I managed to augment our travelling means to an amount sufficient for a month's trip. Thus all was arranged.

The ceremony was unpretending. The pew-opener, a very motherly person, who was taking snuff in a side-aisle when detailed for parental service, attended my bride to the altar. The beadle was my best man, and, apart from a slight aroma of beer, I could have desired no better. Thus I carried off my prize.

With a foresight suggested by the frugal mind, we had resolved to assume the demeanour of persons long, and, if possible, not quite happily, married. That experiment, or part of it, had, we knew, been attempted before, and seldom with marked success, hotel-bills, with few exceptions, being found to remain at high nuptial pressure. Nevertheless, we hoped, with a little previous rehearsing, to overcome all difficulties. "Dolly," was to be for the nonce a dormant title—"Mr. Sweetlove," "Adolphus," and, at times, "My dear," taking its place. "Grace," which I confessed my inability to pronounce in any but a suspiciously-tender tone, was to be changed to "Honoria," a sonorous name, and susceptible of a stern, not to say rebukeful intonation.

We even sketched out a slight quarrel or so.

"Waiter, this soup is excellent. It is served hot. I wish, Mrs. Sweetlove, I could pay the same compliment to the soup at home!"

"Oh, Do—hem, Mr. Sweetlove—how can you say so? Don't I know how particular you are? Do I ever neglect a single thing that concerns your comfort?"

"Seeing, my dear, that you enjoy at least an equal share of my 'comforts,' I am at a loss to perceive the merit of the sacrifice!" sneers the unkind husband.

"I am accustomed to such replies, and disregard them. Will you have some fish?"

"Honoria!"

"My dear! Command yourself. The servants."

"Some fish. Waiter, you needn't stop. Strange, Mrs. Sweetlove, that in all these years you have never learned respect and obed— Oh, you darling!" For the waiter had vanished; yet, alas! undeceived; for, if such phenomenon as an internal wink be physically possible, in that man's eye I saw it.

"If you had gone on a moment longer, Dolly dear, I feel I should have cried," remarked one of the parties to this reprehensible dispute.

"Honoria!"

"Call me so again, when we're alone, and I'll come and pinch you," said Grace the shrew.

I am not going to describe our pleasant wanderings. Ah, happy, happy days! But for that inexorable law which prohibits marrying for the first time more than once, how often would we renew the blest experience!

At the end of three weeks, certain symptoms in our money chest seemed to suggest the expediency of deciding upon our future course, hitherto only vaguely referred to as an intention to return to London and "buckle to."

"If my figures be correct," I observed to my wife, after some certain calculations, "we may take another week, and arrive, Mrs. Sweetlove, in the metropolis, with sufficient resources to defray a cab to—well, say anywhere within the four-mile radius—and there commence our career of usefulness with—let me see—yes—exactly fifteen shillings."

Grace appeared to regard this prospect as, on the whole, rather satisfactory.

"Remember, dearest," she observed, cheerfully, "that in less than two years and a half we shall be rich. I regain my income, you know."

"In which interval," I said, with another hasty calculation, "our existing means will supply us with, for the first two years, something under one farthing a day, for the succeeding half-year, nil! Hang this fifteen shillings! I disdain the provision. It pays no interest. As capital it is insufficient. Far better rely upon that hardy nothing, whose every step must of necessity be in the direction, at least, of affluence."

"Dolly dear, how clever you are!" exclaimed Gracie. "I never thought of that before!"

"You'll see," I answered, confidently. "Courage, pet. Have we not read of another couple who, like ourselves, quitted their brief paradise, and bravely confronted the outer world, with pockets as empty as our own? Few," I continued, "are without a weapon of some sort wherewith to fight the battle of life. I, for example, though I have sheathed my sword, have still another instrument—my pen."

"Pen, love!" echoed Grace, opening her blue eyes.

"Pen, dear," I repeated, slightly ruffled. "Why this amazement? It is an object in familiar use."

"Not with you, dear!" retorted Mrs. Sweetlove, saucily. "I never saw you write but once. That was in the travellers' book, at Penzance. I looked at it afterwards, to correct the misspelling."

"Hon—"

"Call me Honoria again, and I'll bite you!" was the dutiful rejoinder of this exemplary wife.

"This is very sad!" I ejaculated mournfully. "Rebellion, we are told, is as the sin of witchcraft. Of the latter, madam, I know you to have been guilty, else should not I be here beside you, erroneously styling myself your lord and master. But, that these crimes should be found allied—however, I waive the subject. Enough too, love, of the remoter future. Hey for one other jolly week, then to town and—and—buckle to!"

We started next day, for Fowey.

#### BY THE RIVERSIDE.

##### A SHADY NOOK.

No person of middle age and vigorous appetite sympathises more heartily with athleticism than the writer. I love a cricket-match, and enjoy the prospect of lusty gentlemen engaged on a broiling afternoon in the exercise known to sporting writers as "leather hunting"—which, as my readers are probably aware, consists in running after a cricket-ball impelled in various directions by a remorseless batsman, who having mastered the bowling gives the field a fine time of it. It is delicious to watch little Purseleigh's short legs running hopelessly after a hit for four, and still more invigorating to hear him declare that he never enjoyed cricket more in his life. Perhaps he does, for Purseleigh is a steadfast little man, and a rising light at

the bar. His energies, which are unceasing, are concentrated upon two objects: the increase of his income, and the reduction of the too solid flesh which threatens to encumber him. Wherefore he passes all his leisure time in the Turkish bath, or in an improvised machine of the same kind which he has organised at home, on the back of a high trotting cob, on the lofty bicycle, in the cricket-field, or in a wager-boat. I respect and admire Purseleigh, but I should love him better if I could see him at rest just for once. For what is better than perfect repose under favourable conditions of light and temperature? Of course, there will always be differences of taste as to the best kind of repose. I knew a man once, who, early in July, would pass an entire day in the fields asleep on his back in the sun. He declared that he enjoyed this fiery rest exceedingly, and that, moreover, it increased his manly beauty by burning his skin to the hue of a Red Indian. I daresay he is alive now, and probably keeps up his extraordinary style of holiday-making; but as for me, albeit I love to look upon sunny spots, I prefer to look upon them from a grateful shade, as the Latin poet loved to admire the raging sea from afar.

At Skindle's, hard by Maidenhead-bridge, I realise my dream in perfection—the preservation of personal coolness, and the admiration of exertion and heat in others. From my open window, carefully protected from the noonday glare, I look delightedly on such patches of bright blue sky as are visible through rents in the leafy screen. The sun shines through the tender green leaves with delicious effect. Here and there a splash of light comes bodily through and brightens a fragment of emerald turf; anon, as a passing cloud struggles for an instant against victorious day, little sunbeams play at hide and seek among the laburnums and westerias. From beneath the dome of verdure I catch a magnificent glimpse of the river, blazing with light. As it breaks against the arches of Maidenhead-bridge, the flood gleams with metallic splendour. As the blades of sun-defying oarsmen feather sharply, they fling off from their thin edge a sheet of silver. All the narrow strip of riverscape visible beneath the leafy fringe of Skindle's sparkles and glitters with a silvery sheen. As a tiny sailing-boat glides slowly past, the gaff becomes transfigured from a spar of modest wood

into a rod of burnished silver. There is no fatigue to the eye in watching the glittering scene from the snug retreat, whence arises the soft murmuring of musical voices, ever and anon broken in upon by the bright ripple of feminine laughter.

I bless my stars that our cheerful, not merry company—Heaven defend me from merriment in hot weather!—is composed of quiet folk, neither very old nor very young; neither exacting age nor tiresome youth being represented among us. Our water-party has left at home—except one dog too precious to be left among children—all creatures of less than sixteen or more than sixty years. It is hardly necessary to add that the sixteen-year-olds are of the fair or unfair sex only. No person in his senses would spoil the tranquil beauty of riverside scenery by importing into it Mr. Hobbledehoy. No doubt he is a fine fellow at his school, not quite, if my recollections be accurate, the Christian gentleman and Protestant hero that a few enthusiastic writers would make him out to be, but yet strong, manly, and self-reliant, if a little coarse, brutal, and tyrannical withal. But as he shines most brilliantly at school it would be a sin and shame to remove him from that congenial sphere, and “that horrid boy” is carefully excluded from our summer-day’s enjoyment, as an incongruous and impossible element. The maiden of sixteen is a very different person. She is not deserving of the stigma of her dramatist—but stay—let me pause, and in the absence of a copy of Mr. Sheridan’s works, inquire the precise age at which she was “bashful” in his time. Was it sixteen or fifteen? A year or two, however, does not make much difference now, whatever it may have done when George the Third was king. I count myself a happy philosopher in being acquainted with a large number of damsels between the ages of twelve and twenty, and I feel proud to bear testimony to the fact that I never discover the slightest approach to bashfulness in any of them. Their self-possession is admirable, and a lesson and reproach to the “gushing” young lady of the last generation, who now, although a matron, and despite a cincture of formidable size, and a duplex or triplex chin, suffers her natural impulsiveness to penetrate the adipose tissue in which it should be, but is not, buried. I have been privileged to hear their comments

on the fully-developed “gusher.” Their dainty noses become “tip-tilted” at an astounding angle as they pass judgment on the dowager Duchess of Gandershire, as a “vulgar hysterical old creature.” I listen to them with admiration and awe. There is no doubt on my mind that they could give the duchess referred to a good many points all round the compass. They have been educated as rational beings, whereas even possible duchesses, thirty or forty years ago, were so taught as to develop their emotional rather than their reasoning faculties. Hence “gush” and hysterics generally, and the verse and prose by which those conditions were maintained. The young ladies who condescend to illumine my humble dwelling with their presence are of another complexion altogether; and I have brought a strong detachment to the riverside to-day with two distinct objects: one of which is the gratification of a taste for scenes à la Watteau, and the other the quickening of a naturally sluggish mind. The “damozels,” as it is pretty and archaic to call them, fulfil the contract which I had mentally made with them in the most generous fashion. Whether they will prove joys for ever to the young gentlemen whose destiny it is to wed them, I know not, nor do I care, but I am quite satisfied with their appearance as things of beauty this afternoon. To look upon them, when one is in the blissful state of mind brought about by a moderate consumption of “chaudfroid” of grouse, “aspic de foies gras,” and “Irroy’s carte d’or”—is a solemn delight. As they walk about in the shade, I wonder how they can move at all in the wonderful dresses, buttoned—like Paddy’s coat—behind, and into which they appear to have grown. Graceful as a willow-tree is the tall young lady in toad colour, as she stands on the turf, and beneath a widely-spreading tree fulfils the requirements of the most exigent student of harmonies. Another “damozel,” peach-cheeked and hazel-eyed, evidently knows all about the “symphonies” to be got out of gray and yellow, for her pale-hued cashmere robe is enlivened with yellow bows and ribbons, which culminate in a superb Marshal Niel rose in her hat. Also the maiden in fawn colour, with a suspicion of rosy-hued serpents wandering about her costume till they unite in a wondrous wreath of roses, is a picture to gaze upon, as she stands on a strip of gravel-walk. They know all about

colour, these young persons, and could explain exactly the colour-tone of their wondrous costumes. The fawn-coloured one models, to my certain knowledge, very well, and they can all draw and paint fairly. Their conversation is not entirely about the "last new novel," although I caught, just before I became absorbed in reverie, a few words referring to a popular novelist, as a "person entirely ignorant of the usages of society,"—"detestably vulgar in thought and expression," and so forth. The one crushing adjective with my damsels "aux tendres couleurs," is "vulgar." One may, it seems, be wicked, depraved, dishonest in thought, and treacherous in deed, without awaking any great measure of indignation in the maidens in ribbons and bows and roses; but one may not be vulgar. As their curly heads—all cropped and decked à la bébé—pass to and fro, I catch odd ricochets of sound as it were. Heaven preserve us, is the young "symphony in fawn colour and pink" in earnest? She is, as I gather—for it is thirsty weather, and that Rüdesheimer cup was really very good—a pessimist. Can this fair and beautiful creature, with her fluffy head nodding under the "sweetest" Mother Hubbard chapeau in the world, be really serious? "You read the article, of course, dear. They try very hard to demolish poor dear old Schopenhauer, but they cannot. It would have been, ah! how much awfully nicer if we had never been born. And about Schumann now?" and she vanishes out of earshot towards the great rose-tree, against which she stands, knowing, the artful puss, that the pink tones of her dress carry up the pleased eye to the masses of rose-blooms which form a background for her graceful figure. And is this what comes of Cheltenham College, of Queen's, and of Girton? Celestial colour-harmonies embodied in idyllic robes, great sunshades with rivers of lace careering round them, the late Mr. Schumann, the present Mr. Wagner, Schopenhauer, and "it were better for us that we had never been born!"

Somehow it seems later and cooler. The silvery sheen has departed from the river, now invaded by deep green and purple shadows. The "symphonies" too have vanished for the moment, and I look across the lawn at the solitary angler, sitting like Patience in a punt. How changed has Skindle's become within the memory of man

—that is to say, the memory of some men. Time out of mind the Orkney Arms at Maidenhead-bridge has been a famous hostelry. Perched on the edge of the great Bath-road, between London and Reading, the old inn knew the days when country squires in their coach-and-six rolled up to town at the rate of two miles an hour, as well as those in which some half-hundred four-horse coaches "spanked" past within the twenty-four hours. Then came a period when the Orkney Arms knew coaches no more, and the world—save that of waggons and market-carts—drifted far away from Maidenhead-bridge. In the silent summer morning, long before the stars had died out of the dark blue sky, a long procession of waggons still stopped at the old-fashioned inn on their way to market, the mouths of Dobbin and of Hodge were duly washed out, and fruit and vegetables sped onward to hungry London. But the last notes of the guard's post-horn had died away in Fontarabian echoes long before a revival came to the inn by Maidenhead-bridge. Then came the great athletic revival, and Skindle's became known as a great place for boating-parties, and a special house to stop at on the way down the river from Oxford. The quarters were good, the beer was undeniable, the chops and bacon perfect, the new-laid eggs as far beyond suspicion as Caesar's wife herself. Down the river from Henley, Marlow, and Cookham, and up from Windsor, rowed stalwart youth, to partake of the good fare and smoke a pipe at the honest old inn. Then came the reign of a new proprietor, imbued with the traditions of the Trafalgar, and holding special theories of his own as to whitebait. Skindle's was revolutionised. From a dusty and old-fashioned roadside inn, it suddenly bloomed out in a pleasant lawn leading down to the river, in snug rooms abutting on the said lawn, in trees, in shrubs, and in cookery. Skindle's cared but little now for market-carts and waggons, for the charioteer of the new period fixed on Maidenhead-bridge as his goal. Down came the drags by the dozen and the score—the procession led by His Grace of Badminton, by Mr. "Hugh Smith," or by poor "Harry" Hastings. The oldest inhabitant of Taplow woke up with a start, and thought the old coaching-days must have come back again, as the notes of the post-horn rang in his ears, and the slashing teams, roans and browns, bays and grays, came this time

really "spanking" up to the Orkney Arms—and it was only after rubbing his eyes for some time that he saw the difference between a drag and a mail-coach. The carriage was perfect, the horses perfect, the harness all that could be desired—but, save in the case of two or three members of the Four-in-hand Club, the coachman himself was not all that could be desired, and once elicited a quaint remark from my aunt's coachman, whose pace and accuracy through a crowded thoroughfare afford his employer unfeigned delight. I asked this son of Nimshi one day what he thought of the four-in-hand driving of the period. His answer was peculiar. "Drivin', sir! Do you call it drivin'? There's a many as can shove along, but precious few as can drive." But if the driving was rather fast and furious than skilful—the meat and drink were excellent, and to get the Trafalgar cookery, wines, and management moved up to Maidenhead-bridge was "too awfully jolly" a thing to neglect. So the generation of plungers entered into Lewis's—late Skindle's—and ate and drank there, and doubtless laid one another many a six to four in hundreds and "monkeys"—entre deux plats. Lewis's became the fashion. High-bred dames turned Sabbath-breakers, and came down by the afternoon train to Taplow on Sundays, to row under Cliefden-woods, and eat whitebait afterwards at the Orkney Arms. Then more very fashionable people, utterly exhausted by doing nothing all the week, elected to retreat to Skindle's from Saturday to Monday, to refresh their weary minds and bodies. Since this the lawn has become the dream of beauty I have vainly striven to describe.

As the air has—while I have been maunding of plungers and whitebait—grown decidedly cool, and the crescent moon has put in a pale protest against the long-protracted day, I will, methinks, jump into a canoe, paddle towards Cookham, passing by crowded Boulter's-lock, and nestle for awhile under "Cliefden's proud alcove," hung with gorgeous drapery of many-hued leafage.

Round the magnificent yellow-green yew-trees lurk other shades than that of "wanton Shrewsbury." Frederick, Prince of Wales, the "Fred" who would be forgotten were it not for the famous epitaph—

Here lies Fred,  
Who was alive, but now is dead—

dwell for a short space at Cliefden, carrying hither his little vanities, trumpery

ambition, and general smallness. Little as "Fred" was in himself, he was the occasion of some considerable events on this the finest river site in England. Conceived, fussy Thomson, author of *The Seasons*, produced his masque of *Alfred* at Cliefden while "Fred" was consul; and as I turn my back on Cookham-lock, and glance towards the right bank of the river in quest of the White Lady without a Head, it seems that the strains of our National Anthem are borne on the wind, from the house where God Save the Queen was played for the first time a hundred and thirty-seven years ago.

It is an easy paddle down the river, now from silver to steel by the early moonlight. The air is full of melody; the sweet, low cooing of the doves responding to the deeper and hoarser tone of the rooks. There are lights now shining from Skindle's, and I am particularly interested in those in a certain room opening on to the lawn. There—for I have dawdled over long at Cliefden—is my water-party, very seriously intent upon dinner. My entrance is greeted with as much hilarity as the manners of the present day will admit of, and the dinner progresses pleasantly enough, with but little conversation, for everybody is tired and hungry. Soon after dinner, the "symphonies" and "arrangements" in divers colours vanish altogether. This is hard, as I had intended to hold a lengthened conversation with the disciple of Schopenhauer, hoping, when inspired by the moon and a cigar, to bring her to a better way of thinking; but she is gone, and I must needs go rest to the pleasant lullaby of multitudinous birds.

## DOUBLEDAY'S CHILDREN.

BY DUTTON COOK,

AUTHOR OF "YOUNG MR. NIGHTINGALE," "HOBSON'S CHOICE," &c. &c.

BOOK V. THE FURTHER NARRATIVE OF BASIL DOUBLEDAY.

CHAPTER IV. ARIADNE.

I WAS greatly surprised to learn of Paul's departure; and something I felt of indignation. Doris, no doubt, perceived this; she hastened to defend and excuse her husband.

"It was not his fault," she said; "indeed it was not his fault. He was obliged to go."

"But so suddenly!"

"He could not help that. He would have stayed if he could. You do not question that he would have stayed, if he could?" She spoke impetuously.

"No, Doris. And he will return——?"

"God knows when he will return." And she burst into tears.

I had for the moment failed to note how wan she looked—how dejected and ill. She was trembling violently from nervous excitement, perhaps, as much as from physical weakness. I had never seen her before with so haggard a face—with such a wild light in her eyes. She was very pale, and her lips were parched with fever—her hair was pushed from her face, as though she had been pressing her hands upon her burning forehead. Her manner was distracted, and she spoke incoherently; she scarcely knew what she said, I think, she was altogether so unnerved and agitated and scared.

"I am glad you're come, Basil," she said, in low, faltering tones, "I've been wanting so to see you. Will you have some tea? Have you had breakfast? What time is it? I've lost count of things somehow. It wasn't raining when you came in, was it? I do so hope it will be fine, for Paul's sake. He's gone from me—but I told you that before. What was I saying just now? I am wretchedly tired, I feel quite worn out; it's from the fatigue and excitement of yesterday, I suppose. People said the play went off very well; but I own I was not satisfied. I did not know that Paul was going away. It came upon me quite unexpectedly. It was a heavy blow to me—it was as much as I could do to bear it. I don't think I shall ever act again; I'm left without heart, or mind, or strength for anything. You don't know—you can't think—no one will ever know—how dear Paul is to me. He has gone, and he has taken my life with him, or nearly so. I am sure I am half dead this morning. Yes, and my senses have gone—and my heart—and my heart—that's with Paul my husband. It's hard—it's very hard—but I am going to be brave for Paul's sake. I promised him that I would be brave—and I mean to keep my word."

I said all I could to soothe her. She had great need, as it seemed to me, of rest and quiet. Her mind was suffering as from a heavy blow. Her deep love for her husband, I did not doubt; and yet it was strange to me to find my sister, the Doris of my childhood—the light-hearted, sprightly, high-spirited Doris—troubled so

seriously. In truth, I had not supposed her capable of such profound emotion; but then I had never once imagined that sorrow could cast upon her shadows so dense, and dark, and ominous.

In my own heart, I could not but think with some severity, perhaps with some injustice, of Paul Riel, whom I held accountable for her sufferings. Was he worthy of the love she had given him? of the sacrifice she had made for him? I deplored her meeting with him. It was a misfortune that she had ever known him.

"You must not accuse Paul," she said, as though she had read my thoughts. "He is altogether blameless in this matter. He is all that is good, and kind, and noble. He left me simply at the call of duty. You would not have had him betray his duty? He has not deserted me, Basil—you don't think that?"

"I will not think that, Doris."

"And it may be that his absence will be but for a little while—that he will come back to me very soon."

"Indeed, I trust so, Doris."

"Ah! but you say that, not really believing it, but merely to pacify me. You treat me as a child crying for the moon, and you promise me what I cry for, to cheat me into being quiet and going to sleep. But Paul will come back—you do not doubt it?"

"Pray be calm, Doris; try and be calm."

"I am calm—only—what do you know of Paul, that you should distrust him? Ah! this conspiracy—you know of that. The thought of it makes me shiver. It stops the beating of my heart; it tortures, it kills me, this conspiracy. Dear Basil, be kind to me, deal frankly with me. See how broken and wretched I am! If I have ever acted inconsiderately towards you, or offended you in ever so trifling a way, don't visit it upon me now; for, indeed, I can't bear it. You must be my friend, and help me in this dreadful time."

She spoke with a sort of wild plaintiveness that was intensely pathetic.

"Do you know more of Paul than I do? Tell me of this conspiracy. All you know of it."

"I have but general knowledge of it, Doris, and probably you know as much as I do. As I understand the matter, Paul is a member of one of the many political societies that exist, and have long existed, on the continent of Europe. These secret brotherhoods have one object in common, if they seek its attainment by different

paths. They would advance the cause of Liberty all over the world. They would destroy tyranny wherever found. You know to what these doctrines tend? To revolution and the shooting down, as though they were mere wild beasts, of all kings and ministers who oppress the people, and are the foes of freedom."

"I know, I know," she said wearily. "I have heard all that before so often. It is all such jargon to me! Why need my poor Paul trouble himself about such matters? Why could he not stay here and be happy with me? He does not love me as I love him. I would have given up all the world for him; yet he sacrifices me for the sake of all this foolish talk about liberty and tyranny and the rights of the people! He was not well when he went away; he is far from strong; he is not fitted to take part in these rash ventures and perils. He was mad to join in their conspiracies."

"He should not have married, I think, with these terrible obligations binding him," I said musingly.

"He should not have married me? How can you say that, Basil? He loved me—he will always love me. He is my own, own husband; he will never love but me. He is mine, all mine—no, not all, for he belongs in great part to this hateful conspiracy. You are right, Basil; the obligations binding him are terrible indeed. He is their abject slave. He is sent for and he must go. He is without will of his own. Some unseen power commands him, and he must obey at all costs, at the sacrifice even of his wife, poor woman! It is a cruel thing that a man should be so bound. I detest these secret societies."

"They are the bitter fruits of centuries of wrong-doing, and misery, and oppression. They are the protests of a people against the tyranny of their rulers. If madness and crime result, let those take heed who have laboured to enslave and to crush their fellow-men by heaping upon them shame after shame, outrage after outrage."

"Ah, Basil, it is vain to say such things to the wife of a conspirator whose life is in danger! Paul has gone because he was bidden to go. He must do what he is bidden to do. He is bound by an oath—is not that so? And if there were no oath, still that sense of honour, as it is called, which constrains men to do so many strange and incomprehensible things, would be equally binding upon him. He must quit me—to do what, Basil?"

I hesitated to answer her.

"You know; but you shrink from saying. He has gone to strike a blow for freedom—is not that how I should speak of it? But the blow falls upon his wife's heart! This thing is killing me, Basil. Paul is in dire peril. Is it not so? You turn away. He is ordered to attempt the life of the French king. What has the French king ever done to me, that I should wish him dead? Basil, it is horrible! It maddens me to think of it. Will Paul return alive and safe to me? Tell me that."

"Calm yourself, Doris. Hope for the best."

"Hope for the best, when the worst is happening! Basil, do you know the doom of those who attempt the life of the French king? They are made to walk barefoot to the Place de Grève; a black veil covers them. Then, in presence of the guillotine, they are cruelly tortured before they are permitted to die: their right hands are chopped off with an axe, and then—and then— It sickens me to think of it. It is too horrible! I read it in a book by chance one day, and it has haunted me ever since. The thought visits me in my dreams in the dead of night, and I wake screaming with horror. Paul has gone from me to die like that! Do you wonder that I am ill; that my heart is ready to break; that the tears rush to my eyes; that my brain seems on fire; that I tremble so; that my hands burn; that my voice gives way, and I cry and wail in an agony of grief? Basil, I am going mad! Be comforted? How can I be comforted? What can I look forward to if Paul dies? And he has gone to his death! I could read it in his face as he left me—he has gone to his death! What am I to do—what can I do but die too? I must be where my Paul is—my husband. If he is lying cold and stark in his grave—well, let me lie down there too beside him—I ask only that. I must be where Paul is. If he is dead I promise to die too—soon, very soon—only don't part us. We're husband and wife, you know; we should not be parted. God has joined us together—ah! and man has sundered us!" She gave way to a sort of paroxysm of grief.

"Doris," I said, "you promised to be brave. Did you not tell Paul that you would be brave?"

"Yes, yes; I said so. You do well to remind me of it, Basil. I'll keep my word—at least I'll try to keep my word."

"And you'll try, too, to be patient. If it be, as you say, and as indeed seems only

too likely, that Paul has gone away upon a service of danger, let him think that he leaves a brave wife behind him, who is hoping for him, praying for him, waiting with a courageous patience for his safe return to her. Doris, it would afflict Paul cruelly, it would unnerve him completely, if he could think of you as you are now, my poor sister, with this downcast face, these tears, these tremulous limbs, this burning forehead."

"Can he see me, I wonder?" she said, with a start, staying her tears for the moment and smoothing her disordered hair. "Sometimes I almost persuade myself that the eyes of love have power to diminish space and pierce obscurities, and can watch and gaze at far-distant things as though they were quite near. For hours and hours I have sat quite still, and it seemed to me that I could see before me in a bright circle surrounded by black clouds the figure of Paul—very small and a long way off, yet so clear that his every feature was distinctly visible to me. He was standing upon the deck of a ship, that rocked upon a rough sea, straining his eyes for the first glimpse of that France he loves so fondly, and for whose sake he has gone to risk his life. He looked calm, yet very resolute, with lowered brows and compressed lips, and very pale—but then he was always pale. It was not a dream, Basil; it was all far more true and real than in a dream. If Paul had turned he could have seen me, our eyes would have met. But he had no thought for me. France is so much to him, and his wife so little! Yet there may be moments in which he thinks of me, and can see me as I saw him. For it's gone now, Basil. It was like a vision, strangely bright and distinct, yet gone suddenly, before one could call to it to stay. Perhaps there are times when such visions open before him, and I appear to him plainly and clearly, as he appeared to me. I must be careful, Basil, and, as you say, patient; and, as I promised Paul, brave—as brave as I can be, though I fear me that cannot be very brave after all. But I wouldn't have him see me like this. How dreadfully untidy, and my hair all loose, and my face wet with tears! Yes, Basil, I'll do as you tell me; you're clever and wise, and you've always given me good advice. I'll wait and hope and pray." She started and shivered; a new thought or fear seemed to trouble her.

"Basil," she said presently, in a low,

frightened voice, "can I pray for him? Ought I to pray for him? For I forgot to tell you one thing. When I saw him, in that vision I spoke of, he stood erect with his arms folded and his hands half concealed; yet I could see, for all he seemed trying to hide them, that he held in one hand a knife and in the other a pistol. He has gone from me to commit a crime, that is the plain truth. Can I pray for his success?"

"Pray that he may be safely restored to you."

"But with blood upon his hands? Can I pray that he may return a murderer? Heaven will not listen to such a prayer as that. Basil, it would be like praying for a curse."

"Pray that he and all of us may be spared both temptation and sin."

"He has already yielded to the temptation—the sin is very near to him. But he does not think it sin; he firmly believes it to be a duty. Heaven will remember that when he comes to be judged. It is in his eyes a grand and solemn duty. Accomplishing it, he is content to sacrifice his own life—and mine, of course, though he does not know how closely my life is bound to his, and that when his heart stops beating mine will stop too—I love him so, I love him so! It's hard to know what to do. I never thought that I could be so unhappy as I am; that my life could be so full of trouble as it is. Yet I have known what it is to be happy. I was very happy as Paul's wife. It is something to think of when I am most miserable, that I was very happy as Paul's wife. I am glad you came to see me, Basil; it was good of you to come. I am the better for having seen you; I am calmer, more composed, already, you see; and you must not think the worse of me for having talked so wildly, for having given way so completely. My poor brain was in such a whirl, I hardly knew what I said or what I did. I am better now. I think I'll make myself a cup of tea; I've tasted nothing since Paul went away—my poor Paul!—and that's long, long hours ago now."

But she was hardly well enough for me to leave her until late at night, when she had fallen into a deep sleep. Fortunately the landlady of the lodging-house in which Doris and her husband had been living, proved to be a good-natured and worthy sort of woman, of kindly bearing and somewhat superior manners. There was nothing about her of the unsympathetic

quality we are apt to associate with the mistress of a lodging-house. She was not ill-favoured, nor was she ungentle of speech or conduct. Already, I think, she had been won by a certain charm which seemed to attend upon Doris, and to win interest on her behalf. And most women are susceptible of a sort of feminine tenderness, or, it may be, commiseration, for a newly-wed wife.

"You may rely upon my taking every care of her, as though she were my own child, sir, indeed you may," said the landlady. "I am sure I feel for her, poor dear. If my own dear daughter had lived—but she died when she was only thirteen, and it nearly broke my heart—she'd have been about the same age by this time; and she'd exactly the same bright, pretty-coloured hair. She's in heaven, now, poor darling. Let's hope she's been spared a many cares. I shall sit up all night, sir, you may rely upon that. She shan't want for nothing."

I had enquired of Doris as to her future plans.

"I shall remain here," she said. "Paul will write to me here. He has promised to write to me to this address. I shall get his letters the sooner by remaining here. Indeed that makes it impossible for me to go from here."

"You have money, Doris? Pray deal frankly with me."

"Paul left me all he could. It was not much—he could not spare much. We have been very poor, Basil, as you know. We are likely to remain poor all our lives, I think; but I intend to make what Paul left me last as long as I possibly can, and after that has gone—"

"When that has gone, Doris, you will let me help you?"

"When that has gone I have still this"—she showed me Mr. Leveridge's ring—"it has befriended me before, and will again if need arises. It is of great value; it is quite a fairy ring."

She had slid it upon her handkerchief, and was swinging it to and fro, as the lady is swinging her wedding-ring upon her handkerchief in one of Hogarth's pictures.

She stopped suddenly.

"Don't think me heartless, Basil. I prize this ring though I am making a toy

of it. It came back to me in the strangest way after I had parted with it, as I thought, for ever. I cannot doubt to whose kindness I owe its return to me. He is a good man, that Mr. Leveridge."

Presently she added: "I wanted Paul to take this ring with him. I thought its value might some day prove of service to him. But by accident or by design he left it behind him. I shall be very, very sorry to part with it again, and—Mr. Leveridge will forgive me—when I sell it again it will be to buy bread, for no other reason. But I must live, if I can, for Paul's sake. Poor Mr. Leveridge! If he ever sighed for vengeance—but he never did, I know him better than that—he is fully avenged for my cruelty to him. If he could see me now he would see me sad and weakened, wretched enough. But he would be far more pained than pleased. He had but one fault—he loved me so much more than I could love him. Why did he not love me less? I should have respected him so much more. Strange that love should vary so much in value. Paul's love is all in all to me; Mr. Leveridge's love is nothing to me, or is something to shiver at and start from. Poor Mr. Leveridge!"

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